



News Release

For Immediate Release
Thursday, April 5, 2007
Media Contact:
McKell Drury
Health Program Specialist
801-538-6191

State of Utah Releases New Study on Vermiculite

*Rates for diseases directly related to asbestos exposure were not
elevated in the analysis area*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH), Environmental Epidemiology Program has completed a study of asbestos related cancer rates in a two-mile radius of the former Vermiculite Intermountain facility in Salt Lake City. The study showed that rates for mesothelioma and asbestosis, diseases directly related to asbestos exposure, were not elevated in the area studied. This suggests that exposure from the vermiculite processing facilities was not likely a significant factor in the increased rates observed in other cancers and diseases in the two-mile radius. The health consultation (study) covers cancer rates for a 28-year span from 1973-2000.

Cancer data used in the study were obtained from the Utah Cancer Registry. Mortality data were obtained from the UDOH Office of Vital Records and Statistics for the same population group. Cancer incidence and mortality rates in the two-mile radius study area for all asbestos-related cancers combined, cancer of the respiratory system and intrathoracic organs, and cancer of the lung and bronchus were elevated.

Factors that could not be evaluated in this investigation include latency period, population migration, personal habits, diet, occupational exposures, and familial history of cancer. These issues limit the conclusions that can be drawn. Additional research is needed to address the impact of these risk factors on the elevated rates of respiratory cancers in the study area.

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To read a complete copy of the health consultation: Epidemiological Investigation of Human Exposure to a Contaminated Vermiculite Ore Processing Site in Utah, or for additional information, visit our web site at www.health.utah.gov/enviroepi.

Because former workers at Vermiculite Intermountain and Intermountain Products were likely exposed to airborne asbestos at levels of concern, the UDOH is requesting that former employees contact the Environmental Epidemiology Program at (801) 538-6191 for additional information.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.